

LATIN AMERICA

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SURINAME ELECTIONS: PRESIDENT BOUTERSE'S FUTURE AT STAKE

All hope for President Desi Bouterse lies in the results of the parliamentary elections. In November 2019, President Bouterse was convicted and sentenced to twenty years in jail for overseeing the execution of fifteen political opponents in 1982. Surinamese law states that an arrest cannot be made until all appeals are exhausted. Bouterse has appealed the conviction, allowing him freedom for the time being.

Aside from this conviction, Bouterse also faces international legal troubles. Bouterse was sentenced to eleven years in prison by a Dutch court in 2009 for drug trafficking, but avoided serving his sentence because of his 2010 election victory, which prevented his extradition under an Interpol warrant. If he is not re-elected, Bouterse could face arrest in countries that have extradition treaties with the Netherlands.

With these legal troubles looming, Bouterse is depending on these elections to grant him more time. While preliminary results show the opposition winning, Bouterse is calling for a recount of votes. The Progressive Reform Party (VHP) is set to win twenty seats in the 51-member parliament, while Bouterse's National Democratic Party (NDP) falls behind with just sixteen seats. This will end the NDP's majority, threatening Bouterse's re-election by parliament come August. A president requires two-thirds of the parliament's votes to be elected, practically ending Bouterse's chances, as the VHP has started talks with other opposition parties, promising to

remove the NDP from power.

GUATEMALA: "US NOT ACTING LIKE ALLIES" IN FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei has expressed frustration with the United States administration, which continues to send infected deportees to Guatemala. Guatemala, a country already threatened by growing infection rates, is unprepared for the serious problems brought by COVID-19. With an already overloaded healthcare system, Guatemalan officials feel that the US is not reciprocating in their alliance. Of the deportees, Guatemala has confirmed over 100 deportees arrived with COVID-19 from the United States. President Giammattei's complaint seems to have muddied the US-Guatemala relationship. While US President Trump has offered medical aid to other Central American countries during the pandemic, he has not reached out to Guatemalan officials. President Giammattei expressed hopes that the US would uphold its commitment to alliance, as Guatemala has done.



Alejandro Giammattei - Carlos Sebastián (Wikimedia Commons)



VENEZUELA'S FIRST LADY FACES LEGAL TROUBLES

Cilia Flores, First Lady to President Maduro, will likely face US drug charges in the coming months, in a chain of events stemming from the arrest of her bodyguard, Yazenky Lamas, in 2016. Lamas was arrested in Colombia and extradited to the US to face drug charges. Once thought to be a minor player in the Venezuelan administration, Lamas has proven to play an important role in further arrests. Using his testimony, the US is preparing to charge Flores with drug trafficking and corruption - a move that could weaken President Maduro's administration even further.

While the First Lady does not hold an official position of power, she is one of the most influential political figures in Venezuela. Any charges against Flores will likely result in backlash. In interviews, Lamas details Flores's involvement with a cocaine trafficking incident involving her two nephews that resulted in their conviction by a US court. Lamas is speaking out against the Maduro administration, a decision he says he made because he feels abandoned and betrayed. After years of clinging to power, it is unclear whether Maduro will be weakened by Lamas's testimony.